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Security Council

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Letter dated 22 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, during its presidency of the Security Council in September 2017, Ethiopia will organize a high-level open debate on the theme "Reform of United Nations peacekeeping: implementation and follow-up", on 20 September 2017 at 10 a.m.

In order to help guide the debate, Ethiopia has prepared the attached concept note. I would appreciate it if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Tekeda **Alemu**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

17-15937 (E) 150917

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Annex to the letter dated 22 August 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the high-level open debate on the theme "Reform of United Nations peacekeeping: implementation and follow-up", to be held on 20 September 2017

I. Introduction

United Nations peacekeeping has been an indispensable tool in the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security for much of the past seven decades. In the light of the changing global security environment, the need to reform United Nations peacekeeping so it can evolve and adapt to new realities has long been recognized. In this regard, discussions on reforming United Nations peacekeeping have gathered momentum over the past two years, on the basis of the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/446) and the report of the Secretary-General entitled "The future of peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations" (S/2015/682).

The aim of the high-level open debate is to provide an opportunity for frank discussion on the reform of United Nations peacekeeping and to push forward the implementation and follow-up of peacekeeping reforms that form an important basis for strengthening United Nations peacekeeping, in order to make it fit for purpose in the twenty-first century.

II. Context

The high-level debate will be held two years after the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping and one year after the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial: London 2016, at which substantial pledges were made by Member States to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping, at a time when the demand for its involvement in supporting peace and security and in protecting the most vulnerable has become greater than ever. Today, more than 100,000 peacekeepers are deployed in various parts of the world, with the mandate to protect civilians. The commitments made at the Leaders' Summit were meant to help the United Nations to meet persistent capacity gaps, improve the performance and capabilities of uniformed personnel, support rapid deployment and reinforce and enhance the foundation for future peacekeeping efforts.

However, participants at the Leaders' Summit and the London Ministerial also recognized that those commitments must be accompanied by the reform of United Nations peacekeeping, as set out in the London communiqué (S/2016/872, annex). That is why they welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the future of peace operations. In his report, prepared on the basis of the Panel's report and also submitted in 2015, the former Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, made important recommendations on reforming and strengthening United Nations peace operations through an effective political strategy, improved design and implementation of mandates and enhanced partnerships, so as to make them much more effective, agile and responsive to current realities.

The former Secretary-General briefed the Security Council on his report and his recommendations on 20 November 2015, highlighting the important role that the Council could play in strengthening United Nations peace operations. Accordingly,

the Council, in a presidential statement adopted on 25 November 2015 (S/PRST/2015/22), welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to advance the cause of reform as well as his initiative to undertake a comprehensive review of United Nations peace operations in an effort to consider measures to further strengthen the role, capacity, effectiveness, accountability and efficiency of the United Nations system, including its peace operations. The Security Council took note of the recommendations in his report and those in the report of the Panel, including the recommendations with respect to the strategic partnership with the African Union. In that regard, the Security Council expressed its intention to continue to consider the relevant recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General. There is now a need for a serious and meaningful discussion at the Security Council, with a view to advancing the implementation and follow-up of the report of the Secretary-General and his recommendations.

In the meantime, there are new developments that give added impetus to reform United Nations peace operations. The current Secretary-General, António Guterres, is committed to continuing the reform agenda of his predecessor from day one and has already embarked upon the steps needed to reform the overall United Nations peace and security architecture, including peace operations, in accordance with the recommendations of the review. Many of those reforms will need the full support of Member States, in particular, the members of the Security Council. The high-level debate should, therefore, be seen as an opportunity to convey a strong message of support to the Secretary-General and his reform agenda.

There are also increasing calls for ensuring greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the financing of United Nations peace operations. Although there seems to be a broad understanding of the need to address the issue as much as possible, there are divergent views, not only within the Security Council but also within the wider membership of the United Nations, on how that can be achieved without undermining the efficacy of peacekeeping as a necessary tool for global peace and security. This challenge has manifested itself in the difficult discussions that have recently taken place in both the Council and the Fifth Committee. As a result, there is a need for frank discussion in order to build, within the Council, the consensus needed to achieve the desired objective. The high-level debate is expected to provide that platform.

Another important issue for discussion has been the financing of African Union-led peace support operations authorized by the Security Council. Strengthening partnerships with regional and subregional organizations in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations has already been recognized as imperative to ensuring a timely and effective response to crisis situations. In this regard, the African Union and its regional mechanisms have demonstrated the ability and flexibility to respond to challenging security situations, but they need predictable and sustainable financing and support.

The Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed by the leadership of the two organizations in April 2017, is a welcome development that will be instrumental in addressing the challenges of peace and security across the full spectrum of the conflict cycle. The report of the Secretary-General submitted pursuant to resolution 2320 (2016) provides a good basis for the Security Council to give further consideration to the support provided to African Union-led peace support operations (see S/2017/454). There is undoubtedly a divergence of views on the issue within the Council, which is not expected to be resolved any time soon. However, the high-level debate will provide an important occasion to hold frank discussion at the highest level on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General, in order to forge the necessary consensus on the issue.

III. Specific issues for discussion

To help guide the discussion, members could consider addressing the following questions during the high-level debate:

1. How has the reform of United Nations peacekeeping been implemented over the past two years, and what has been the impact on the performance of missions?

2. What can be done by the Security Council to enhance its role in ensuring implementation and follow-up?

3. How can the Security Council help the Secretary-General in his efforts to reform the United Nations peace and security architecture?

4. What is the status of commitments made by Member States in terms of force generation and the deployment of critical capabilities for United Nations peacekeeping, and what major gaps remain?

5. What can the Security Council do to support the new strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union?

6. Which options proposed by the Secretary-General are acceptable and feasible in providing the support necessary for African Union-led peace support operations?

IV. Briefers

The following briefers will be invited to make presentations on the theme of the discussion:

The Secretary-General;

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat;

A representative from the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

V. Outcome

Ethiopia intends to introduce a draft resolution, to be negotiated by members of the Council and adopted at the high-level debate.